
TIPS, TRICKS AND OBSTACLES

RESTORING SHROPSHIRE'S
VERGES PROJECT
LESSONS LEARNED
Janet Cobb





TIP'S

WHY do we need to restore roadside verges?

- 98% meadows lost.
- Aim is to create long linear meadows.
- Green corridors and connectivity.
- Increase and encourage wildflowers.
- Support pollinators and small mammals.
- Carbon capture
- Last resort refuges
- Soil stability & flood mitigation



Ambient air temperature



Bare, exposed soil



Soil under short grass
e.g. mown lawn



Soil under long grass



Soil under long grass
with wildflowers



Soil under trees

TIP'S

The difference ground cover can make when the ambient air temperature is 26C

- Soil temp 33C on bare soil
- Soil temp 28C on mown grass
- Soil temp 24C in long grass
- Soil temp 20C under long grass & wildflowers
- Soil temp under trees 19C



TIPS

- Follow Plantlife guidance.
- Contact local politicians & highways managers & build a good relationship.
- Decide how ambitious you are i.e local or county.
- Create a good presentation & start touring 😊
- Establish as a constituted group & create a board.
- Raise funds!
- Don't reinvent the wheel 'borrow' mercilessly.
- Take communities with you, pictures tell the story.



TIPS

- Link the initiative to official policies: LNRS; 30by30, the Nature Recovery Network, Lawton Principles, BNG, Species recovery etc etc.
- Organise events big (conferences) & small (visits to sites – nurseries, meadows, farms etc) & make a day of it with a picnic.
- Don't forget hedges, ditches & field margins.
- connect with other groups & organisations. (CPRE, CfGA, meadow groups, wildlife trusts)
- A good strapline “*One Metre Matters*”

North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Document 1: Thriving Nature in North Yorkshire
and York

Short Summary (Non-technical)

February 2026

TRICKS

- There are clear references to roadside verge restoration in the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
 - Responsible Councillor Richard Foster?
 - What role could highways managers play?
 - James Gilroy :Team Leader, Highway Asset Management at North Yorkshire County Council
james.gilroy@northyorks.gov.uk
 - Nigel Smith: Head of Highway Operations at North Yorkshire Council
nigel.smith@northyorks.gov.uk
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TRICKS

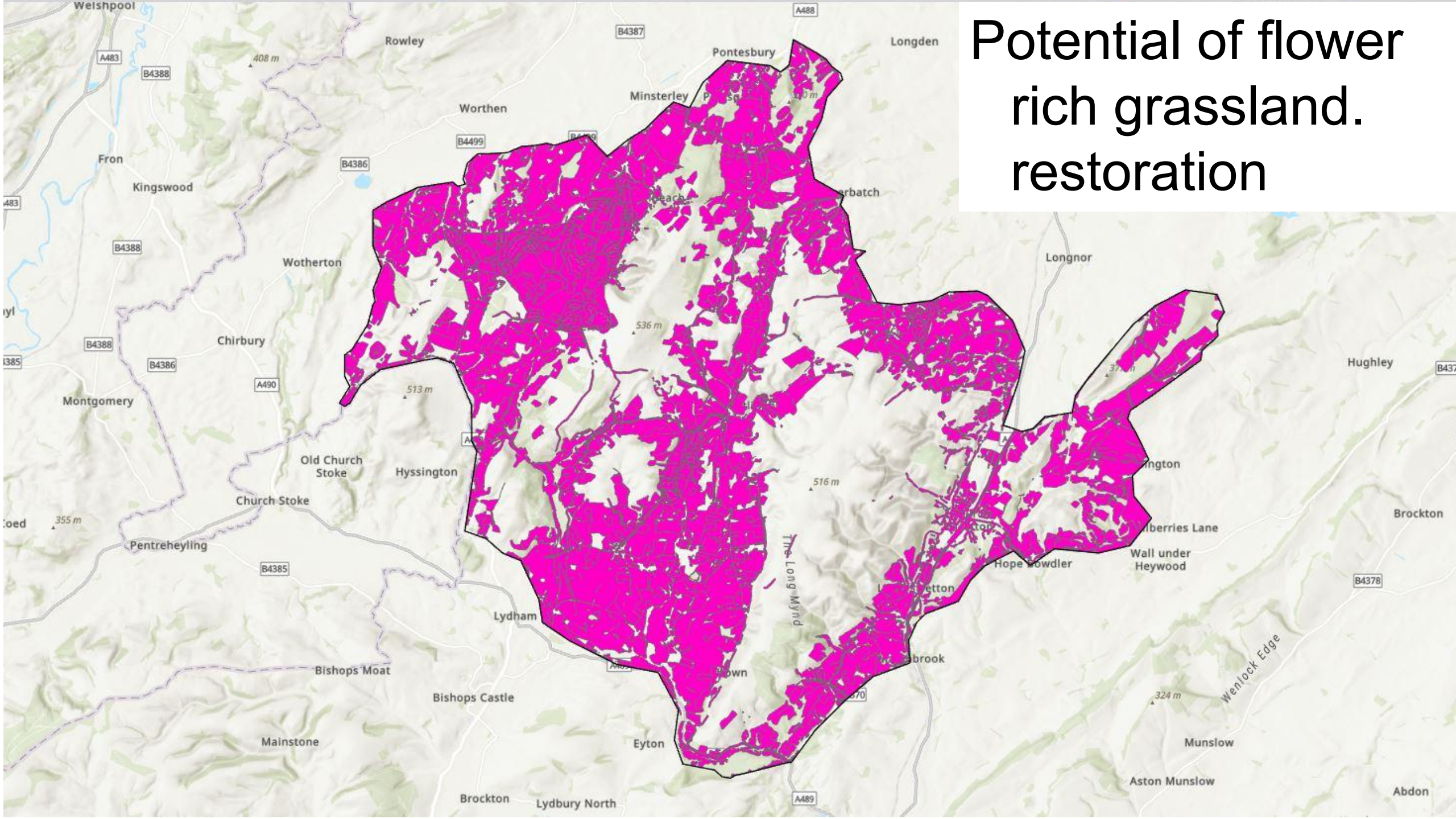
- Establish a website and network of contacts including Parish Councils.
- Create show verges.
- Collect photographs, data, cost benefit analysis
- Establish small volunteer groups – 1 metre matters.
- Write case studies
- Produce a 'how to' leaflet
- Lift any references in the LNRS into a simple actions workbook for town & parish councils.



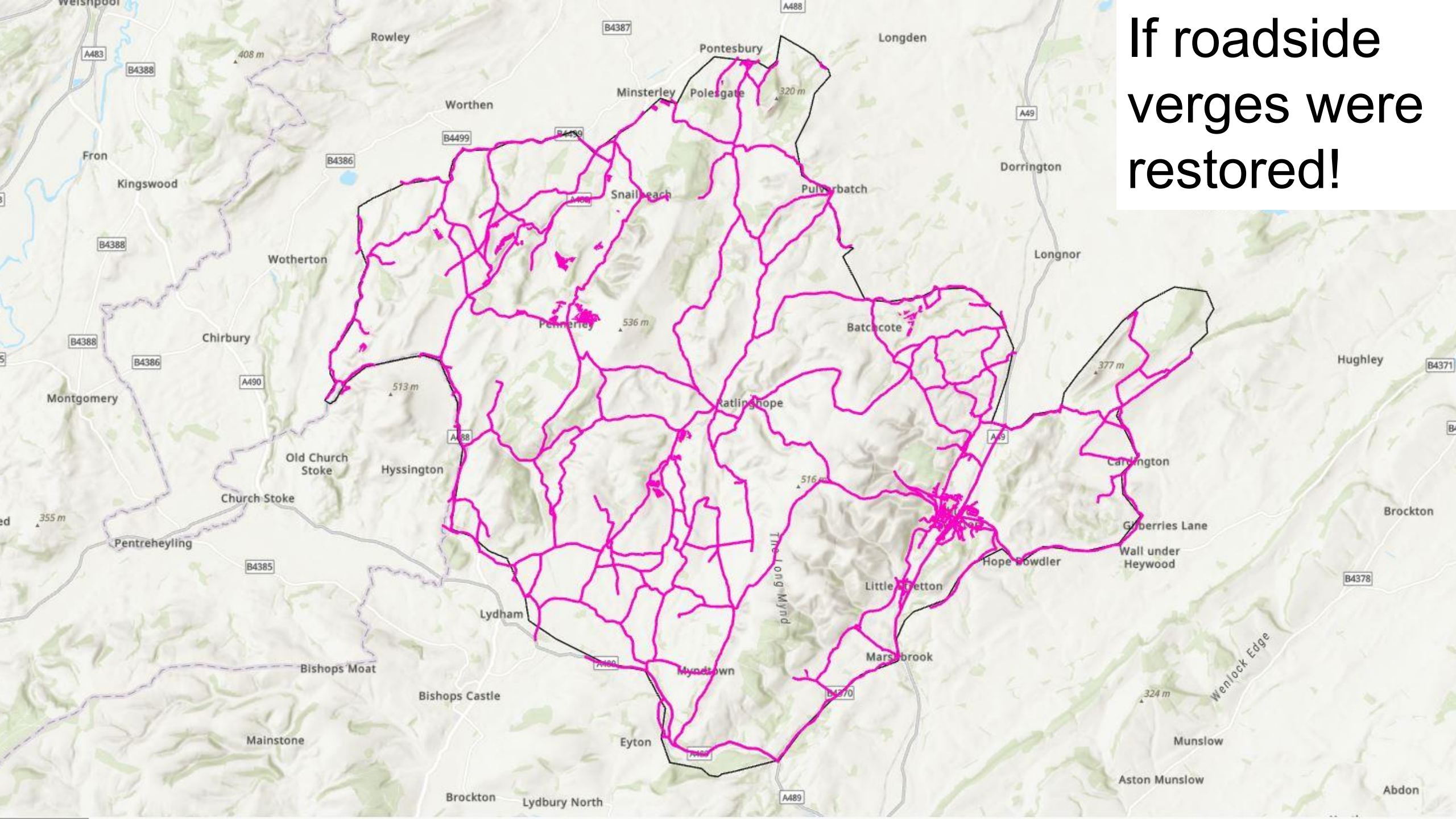
TRICKS

- Make it easy, any verge any town
- Connect up with Yorkshire Local Councils Associations (YLCA)
- Find good parish clerks / local Cllr champions / sparky community person.
- Expand thinking into gardens.
- Create simple bespoke nature recovery plans.
- Encourage Parish clusters
- Grow the idea - establish a Community Land Trust!

Potential of flower rich grassland. restoration



If roadside
verges were
restored!





OBSTACLES

- Public perceptions – managed verges
 - Road safety – visibility cuts
 - Slow process (Show verge)
 - Chemicals – don't use
 - Litter & rats
 - Hogweed, Docks, Thistles & Nettles
 - Ragwort - myths
 - Bulbs (Daffodils!)
 - Nutrients – disposal of cuttings
 - Heatwaves / droughts – soil destruction
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OBSTACLES

- Money!
- Council contracts – mowing regimes.
- Expectations – what does meadow looks like.
- Safety
- Insurance
- Volunteers
- Keeping enthusiasm & support going
- Complaints – FAQs sheet
- Verge damage - signage



IT'S UP TO PEOPLE

- The should be filled with places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife which means so much to people's wellbeing.
 - Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of nature
 - Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and the greatest threat to biodiversity.
 - Town & Parish councils can offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change by implementing hyper local activity
 - The network of Town & Parish councils across the UK offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges
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IT'S UP TO PEOPLE

Don't wait for Politicians

“We'll go down in history as the first society that wouldn't save itself because it wasn't cost-effective.” Kurt Vonnegut
